

# English 263

Jonathan Burton, ENGL 263, Spring 2004, Shakespeare I

## **English 263H - Shakespeare I**

Professor Jonathan Burton

TTH 11:30-12:45

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Stansbury

Spring 2004, West Virginia University

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## **Introduction to Shakespearean Drama**

This course will serve as an introduction to Shakespeare's plays and the practice of Shakespeare studies. We will approach each play through three complementary approaches: (1) close reading; (2) historical analysis; and (3) performance.

## **Required Text**

Greenblatt, Stephen, et. al. The Norton Shakespeare

## **Course Requirements and Grading**

Nine Plays

Four 3-page papers (60 %)

Group Performance (15 %)

4-page Performance Narrative (15%)

Class Participation (10 %)

## **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of every class. You are granted a maximum of three absences during the course of the semester. For each absence in excess of this limit 1% will be subtracted from your final grade. Any student who misses seven classes will be dropped from the class. If you arrive after I take attendance, you are responsible for informing me of your presence at the end of class. Two tardies will be counted as an absence. Students with perfect attendance records will have 3% added to their final grades.

## **Participation**

The quality of this class is dependent on your informed participation. I expect you to complete assignments before class and to make regular contributions to class discussions and exercises. A student who attempts to make at least one contribution per class meeting can expect to earn all 10 participation points.

## **Learning Environment**

WVU is committed to social justice. I support that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect and non-discrimination. Any suggestion as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious

consideration. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700)

### **Submission of Assignments**

1. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified.
  2. Late submissions will not be accepted without a documented excuse of illness or emergency.
  3. All assignments are to be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins.
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1. All assignments are to be proofread for coherence and grammar.
  5. It is highly recommended that you keep a photocopy of every assignment that you submit.

### **English 263H Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

#### **January**

13 Introduction

15 Richard III 1.2 Key Themes: kingship, deceit, seduction

20 Richard III 2.2

22 Richard III 4.2

27 Richard III

29 Midsummer 2.1 Key Themes: obedience, duty, matrimony

#### **February**

3 Midsummer 3.3

5 Midsummer Dialectical Notes

10 Twelfth Night 2.4 Key Themes: carnival, masquerade, order

12 Twelfth Night 3.3

17 Twelfth Night Performance: 3.4.195-359

19 A Winter's Tale 2.2 Key Themes: jealousy, penitence, (re)birth, wonder

24 A Winter's Tale 4.4

26 A Winter's Tale Concordance Assignment

#### **March**

2 Antony & Cleopatra 2.3 Key Themes: difference, waste, virtue

4 Antony & Cleopatra 3.12

9 Antony & Cleopatra Performance: 3.13

11 Othello 2.2 Key Themes: jealousy, transformation, integration

23 Othello

25 Tempest 1.2 Key Themes: power, revenge, parent-child bonds

30 Tempest 3.3

#### **April**

1 Tempest Performance: 4.1.163-262

8 TBA

13 Measure 2.2 Key Themes: morality, desire, restraint

15 Measure 4.2

20 Measure Minor Character Study: Barnardine

22 Much Ado 2.2 Key Themes: faith, jealousy, mutuality  
27 Much Ado 4.1

29 Much Ado

**Final Paper Due May 4:** Genre Comparison: Much Ado, Othello and Winter's

### **Assignments**

2/5 Dialectical Notes for Midsummer: Respond to each of the five assigned passages in a full paragraph. Then offer a concluding paragraph indicating connections between the required passages as well as others in the play you deem relevant.

2/26 Concordance Assignment for A Winter's Tale: In a coherent, thesis-driven essay, track the use of a single word that appears in the play at least six times. Choose a term that you feel is relevant to a major theme of the play and explain why it is important? Consider who uses the word, how and when. Is it used literally or figuratively? Does the use of the word change over the course of the play, or when deployed by different characters?

4/20 Minor Character Study: In a brief, coherent essay, answer the following questions: How is Barnardine significant to the play as a whole? How does he influence the way we see other characters in Measure for Measure? How might he be presented onstage? Why?

5/4 Genre Analysis: Write a brief, comparative essay examining how genre affects Shakespeare's treatment of jealousy or another theme in Much Ado About Nothing, Othello, and The Winter 's Tale.

### **Within 1 week of your performance:**

Performance Narrative: In a coherent, four-page essay discuss the preparations and performance of your group's scene by addressing the following questions: What happens in this scene? How does this scene develop the themes of the play? What did your performance do in terms of blocking (i.e. movement, gestures, and placement on stage), costuming, props or vocalization to foreground those themes? What were the most important lines or speeches for your purposes? What other performative options were available to you and/or your group? What readings of character, action, and so on were enabled (or disabled) by your choices? In retrospect, how might you change your performance and why? Finally, how does this play develop, complicate, or even contradict themes found elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays?

Academic Honesty Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Please note the University definition of plagiarism, as explained in the Undergraduate Catalog: "To take or pass off as one's own the ideas, writings, artistic products, etc. of someone else, for example, submitting, without appropriate acknowledgment, a report, notebook, speech, outline theme, thesis, dissertation, or other written, visual, or oral material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or in part, from the work of others, whether such source is published, including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition, compilation, or other product, or commercially prepared paper" (p. 52). If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, collaboration, documentation, or related issues, please feel free to ask.

Understanding that plagiarism will result in an automatic failure of this course, you are encouraged to consult the websites available through my Shakespeare Home Page at [www.as.wvu.edu/~burton](http://www.as.wvu.edu/~burton).

### **15 Rules for Better Writing**

1. An essay should be structured around a controlling thesis that presents a debatable argument.
2. Each paragraph should begin w/a topic sentence that extends the thesis or applies it to a specific text.

1. Each paragraph should develop the essay's argument with textual evidence that is analyzed in relation to the thesis.
  4. Each line should explain how the evidence presented supports or complicates your argument.
  5. Don't waste time saying what you will argue ("This paper will . . ."); just make the argument.
  6. Write about literature in present tense; write about historical events/movements in past tense.
  7. Don't Summarize. Analyze! .
  8. Avoid undermining your own sentence with hesitant language or use of the first person (I/we):

Weak: I think that Shakespeare's play engages with the debate about gender roles in Elizabethan England.

Better: Shakespeare's play engages with the debate about gender roles in Elizabethan England.

9. Avoid unnecessary pronouns following prepositional phrases:

Wrong: By reading English travelers' narratives it helps the reader to understand the relations between characters.

Right: Reading English travelers' narratives can help a reader to understand the relations between characters.

Wrong: In More's Utopia it shows how the people of the island do not trust themselves.

Right: More's Utopia presents an island of people who do not trust themselves.

10. Avoid ending a sentence in a preposition.

Wrong: Setebos is the name of a god Caliban believes in.

Right: Setebos is the name of a god Caliban worships.

Wrong: The sailors remained aboard the boat they came in.

Right: The sailors remained aboard the boat in which they came.

1. Avoid separating the subject and verb unnecessarily.

Wrong: So the play in addition to being a romance deals with issues of the time.

Right: So in addition to being a romance, the play deals with issues of the time.

12. Use proper punctuation for titles:

- Underline or italicize the titles of longer works such as books, plays, and epics.

- Place in quotation marks the titles of shorter works such as single poems, short stories, or excerpts.

2. Use quotations to make a point, not to summarize the plot

- Sandwich quotations between two sentences:

The first should contextualize the quotation. The second should explain its relevance for your argument and point out important word choices and/or imagery.

- Following a quotation with a "translation" of it into your own words is redundancy, not analysis .

- When quoting poetry, always indicate line breaks either with slashes or, in the case of longer quotations, by reproducing the line breaks in a block quote.

3. Integrate shorter quotations into the fabric of your own sentences:

Weak: In the account of Drake's circumnavigation we read, "Whereupon they supposed us to be gods."

Better: In the account of his circumnavigation, Drake insists that the natives, "supposed us to be gods."

15. "Male" and "female" are adjectives. "Men" and "women" are nouns. Use them accordingly.